

# Health care for Washington

## 21<sup>st</sup> Legislative District Town Hall



### Key Facts:

- Apple Health is working! 96% of Washington's children now have health coverage.
- The next steps in Apple Health will help us reach many of the remaining 75,000 children in Washington who don't have health coverage.
- The Basic Health Plan currently serves about 100,000 Washingtonians.

### **Apple Health for Kids—Next steps (HB 2128)**

Apple Health for Kids has brought us very near our goal of having health coverage for all kids in our state by 2010. We've reached 96%!

HB 2128 defines the next key steps: simpler administration and outreach to ensure that eligible kids actually get the care they need.

These efforts will also help us get enhanced federal funding to support our effort to have good health coverage for all children.

### **Basic Health Plan (BHP) help for the unemployed (HB 2117)**

Too many Washingtonians are losing their health coverage along with their jobs due to the national recession. We're moving quickly to help. The House has already passed a bill to give unemployed workers access to unsubsidized coverage that will protect their health—and peace of mind—as they search for new jobs.

### **Reducing prescription fraud (HB 2014)**

Drug abuser and pushers will hate HB 2014—but doctors and pharmacists strongly support it. The bill requires prescriptions that are not transmitted electronically to be written on tamper-resistant prescription pads in order to prevent fraudulent prescriptions for narcotics and other dangerous drugs.

### **Cutting red tape and needless costs in health care (HB 1647)**

Needless paperwork and administrative costs are driving up the cost of health care for citizens and taxpayers. HB 1647 will help: It directs the state Insurance Commissioner to organize a public-private partnership – led by a non-governmental organization – dedicated to simplifying health care administration and reducing paperwork costs.

### **Protecting access to organ transplants (HB 1308)**

Most people don't realize they could lose coverage for organ transplants simply because their employer changed health plans.

That should never happen and won't happen, if HB 1308 is signed into law. The bill also reduces transplant waiting periods by the amount of time the insured person had previous relevant coverage.

### **Promoting wellness incentives in health coverage (HB 2160)**

Insurers have asked for specific legal authority to promote wellness through "wellness incentives" such as discounts for non-smokers. This is good policy, and the House has passed legislation that gives clear insurers clear authority to offer these incentive

### **Refining childhood immunization policies (HB 1703)**

HB 1703 promotes childhood immunizations while respecting the rights of parents and personal conscience.

The bill continues to allow parents to request exemptions from school immunization requirements on philosophical or personal grounds. However, before an exemption is granted the parent will need to (1) explain the reason for the request; and (2) provide a certificate from a health care practitioner stating that the parent or guardian received information about the benefits and risks of immunization.

**Improving the efficiency of the Washington State Health Insurance Pool (HB 1713)**

HB 1713 enacts recommendations by the Washington State Health Insurance Pool that aim to reduce paperwork and find additional sources of stable funding to ensure the long-term viability of this insurance pool for the highest cost cases.

**Protecting patients against MRSA infection (HB 1123)**

MRSA is a serious bacterial infection that is very hard to treat. HB 1123 requires every hospital in the state to adopt a policy on MRSA by next January. The policy must include MRSA testing for intensive care or at-risk patients and procedures for arresting the spread of MRSA, if it is detected. Hospitals must notify patients if they are sharing a room with a MRSA-positive patient. In addition, Hospitals must give MRSA-positive patients instructions regarding aftercare and precautions against spreading the infection, and must report MRSA diagnoses to the state Department of Health.

**Health coverage for laid-off workers with complex needs (HB 1401)**

People who apply for individual health insurance coverage must complete a health questionnaire to determine if they have complex needs. If they do, the insurer can refuse to cover them and instead refer them to the costly Washington State Health Insurance Pool. House Bill 1401 helps laid-off workers who may not be able to afford COBRA or WSHIP coverage by exempting them from having to complete the standard health questionnaire. This would help them get somewhat more affordable coverage.

**Health Care Spending (Budget)**

Health care, including employee health insurance and medical assistance, is over 20 percent of the general fund budget. In the 2005-07 biennium, the state spent over 9.6 billion dollars on health care. The rapid growth in per capita health care costs has contributed to the size of the health care budget, making this a prime source of pressure on spending. Except for a brief period in the mid-1990s, health care costs have grown much faster than general inflation.

**Contact your legislators:**

***Senator Paull Shin***

(360) 786-7640 • [shin.paull@leg.wa.gov](mailto:shin.paull@leg.wa.gov)

***Representative Mary Helen Roberts***

(360) 786-7950 • [roberts.maryhelen@leg.wa.gov](mailto:roberts.maryhelen@leg.wa.gov)

***Representative Marko Liias***

(360) 786-7972 • [liias.marko@leg.wa.gov](mailto:liias.marko@leg.wa.gov)